



## *"LETTER OF A CONCERNED RESIDENT"*

### Comments on Scarborough Village Streets Plan Sent to Councillor Kandavel and Project Team April 2025

I am a long-time resident of the area, living on Hill Crescent. I walk the area frequently, use my bicycle for recreational riding, and own a car. The Waterfront Biking Trail passes directly in front of my house. (4E and 4W). I am a senior, which supposedly puts me in the "vulnerable" group. I feel that I am qualified to comment on road traffic issues in the study area *south of Kingston Road* and my observations will be confined to that area. The areas north of Kingston Road may have an entirely separate traffic situation.

#### **Problems with the Process**

In discussions with some of my immediate neighbors, it has become evident that the entire **Streets Plan** process suffers from a systematic bias.

- 1) Most residents simply discarded the Streets Plan notice, believing that it would not directly affect them.
- 2) Only anti-car zealots or people who may be affected by traffic issues make their view known. The vast majority of residents believe that our roads are safe and are happy with the status quo. But there is no attempt to capture this input in the data gathering methodology.
- 3) Before any postulated changes are implemented, residents want to be directly given a chance to decide if they want them. At a minimum, a mail-in ballot should be sent to each household to ascertain the true feelings of the majority of residents. The ballots should be plainly labelled on the envelope so that they are not discarded.

#### **TransformTO Climate Change Action Plan commits to converting 75% of trips under five kilometres to walking, cycling or transit**

The above is a **direct quote** from the information panels of the planners. This is obviously an underlying belief driving the entire program. It is not at all safety related. This noble goal might be attainable for some inner city areas, but how does this make *any* sense at all for our area? With our transit? With our distances? With our weather? With our hills? With our proportion of senior residents?

I believe that this process suffers from a further serious deficiency. It does not differentiate between the types of users of our residential road system.

##### **1) Residents**

These are the people (often seniors) who actually live here and are critically dependent on our roads for access to the outside world to conduct their daily activities. They are the ones who have been paying (extremely high) property taxes for decades to have a functional road system. And, despite the lofty goals set by the city, walking and biking is simply not a viable option for their day-to-day requirements. There is no transit.

##### **2) Recreational Users**

These are bicyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, and drivers who occasionally use the roads to observe our panoramic views, our varied wildlife, and the unique architecture of our houses. Their convenience should be considered, but not at the cost of destroying the utility of the road system for those who depend on it.

#### **Background**

The area of the Scarborough Village Neighborhood where I live is bounded by Ravine Drive/Bellamy Road on the west, Hill Crescent to the South, Markham Road on the East, and Kingston Road to the North. With the exception of buildings on Kingston Road, this is a mature neighborhood, mostly filled with single occupancy detached homes located on very large lots. There are no schools in this area. Many of the homes in the area were constructed in the 1930's.

There are no serious safety issues in the area and it is not clear what pressing problems this Streets Plan is attempting to solve. The **Vision Zero** mapping tool shows exactly **zero incidents** on our residential streets over its entire period of 2008 to the present.

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/road-safety/vision-zero/safety-measures-and-mapping/>

### **Typical City Response to Traffic Complaints**

The City seems determined to make travel on our side streets as slow and difficult as possible. All in the name of “safety”. As an example, take Hill Crescent east of Markham Road. (This is immediately east of the current study area.)

The only serious incident in this area was at Hill Crescent and Heathfield Rd. This occurred March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 03:50 AM when a young male, driving at high speed, killed himself and injured a passenger when he lost control of his vehicle. (The report did not state the estimated speeds nor whether drugs or alcohol were involved.)

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/road-safety/vision-zero/safety-measures-and-mapping/>

Recently, some residents naively approached the city asking about possible increased enforcement or other measures to control the occasional unsafe speeder on Hill Crescent, between Markham Road and Scarborough Golf Club Road. The result was not exactly what most residents had expected.

- 1) Hill Crescent and virtually all of the other residential streets in the area are being reduced to **30 km/hr**.
- 2) **Fourteen** speed humps are being installed on Hill Crescent. This will cost \$56,000. Both Fire Services and Paramedic Services are against the proposal, stating that it will significantly increase emergency response times. (The Police never responded.) How much will it slow down snow removal?

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/sc/bgrd/backgroundfile-247158.pdf>

### **Pedestrian Safety and Sidewalks**

There are no sidewalks in this area. Despite the City trying to impose sidewalks several times over the decades, the residents have made it clear that we don't want them.

- 1) The population density doesn't warrant them.
- 2) There are wide grassy shoulders to each side of our roads that can be used by pedestrians, if necessary. (In the winter, pedestrians may have to move to the nearest driveway if a snowplow comes by.)
- 3) Given the efficacy of snow removal in our area, the city would not be able to keep sidewalks clear in the winter. City bylaws state that **residents** are responsible for keeping sidewalks clear of snow if the accumulation is less than 2 cm. Residents, many of whom are seniors, are already burdened with the monumental task of clearing leaves on adjacent public property (mostly from city trees) every autumn. In theory, the City should clear larger snowfalls. However, this will likely take days since our sidewalks would (rightfully) be among the lowest priority for clearing.
- 4) They are expensive to install and maintain and will likely cause damage to the trees located on both city and private property. Our City claims it is broke. There are more important things on which to spend our money.

The argument has been made that our current road configuration and speed limits are unsafe for children. Setting aside the obvious argument that children should not be playing on our streets, almost a century of experience in our area suggests otherwise. Our daughter, now an adult, grew up here and attended various schools in the neighborhood. (GP Mackie, Jack Miner, RH King.) She and her compatriots often walked to and from school. She, along with several previous generations of children dating back for decades have all managed to survive our supposedly deadly streets with no problems.

There is, however, one simple measure that would greatly increase pedestrian safety, particularly on curves and hills. If a pedestrian tries to follow the rules of the road, walking facing oncoming traffic, there are areas where bushes and low hanging tree branches totally obscure the view that motorists should have of pedestrians. Trimming these bushes and branches is a trivial undertaking that would make things a lot safer for pedestrians without impacting motorists. Examples:

- North side of Hill Crescent where it turns into Bellehaven Crescent. It is impossible for pedestrians and motorists to see each other, especially during the summer months.
- Northeast corner of Hill and Annis. Years when the lower leaves of the giant willow tree on this corner have been trimmed allow sufficient visibility. However, when the leaves grow back to reach the ground, visibility is severely restricted. I do not know if this tree is on City or private property. It doesn't matter. Given the growth rate of willow trees, the **City** should undertake to trim the road-facing lower leaves of this tree **annually**.

### **Speed Limits**

For decades, the speed limit in this area was **30 MPH (48 KPH)**. (There is a chance it was 35 MPH (56 KPH) but I couldn't find out for certain.) When Canada went metric in the 1980s, this was reduced to **40 KPH (25 MPH)**. There is no need to reduce this speed further. Unlike compact, high density neighborhoods, there are appreciable distances to be travelled in our area. There is no safety issue with motorists going 40 KPH, or even 50 KPH. The problems are caused by the occasional reckless drivers who are driving through our streets at 80, 90 or even higher. (See incident, above.) A person who ignores a 40 KPH limit by going double the legal speed will not observe a 30 KPH limit either.

Let us assume that a typical resident takes 300 round trips per year, averaging 2 km each way on the local roads to get to and from his residence. (Less than 6 trips per week.) Reducing the speed limit from 40 to **30 km/hr (18.6 MPH)** means that each and every resident would be forced to spend **an additional 10 hours per year** in their automobiles, toddling about on our local streets! There are those that believe that these slower speeds are actually better for the environment. But any vehicle, whether gas or electric, will waste huge amounts of energy on heating, air conditioning, or simply running its internal systems while spending this needless extra time on our roads. Maximum mileage efficiency for virtually all modern vehicles is about 50 KPH, which means that vehicles will actually consume **more** energy per trip when driven at the slower speed.

### **Speed Humps**

Speed humps are another measure that unfairly torment residents on a day to day basis while causing only occasional inconvenience to non-residents. They should be a last resort, targeted only to areas that specifically suffer from massive traffic volumes caused by drivers taking shortcuts through residential areas while attempting to move between major arterial roads. (Some streets in the Beaches come to mind. Nothing in our area warrants them.) Users who think that they can request a hump or two in front of their houses to slow traffic will likely end up with another Hill Crescent, which is getting **fourteen** of them. (See above.)

Speed humps have the following characteristics. They will:

- Slow down and complicate snow removal. This is especially problematic in a hilly area such as ours where prompt snow removal is essential to safety.
- Cause undue wear and tear on the cars of all residents.
- Greatly increase the response time of police, ambulance, fire and other emergency vehicles. (I'd hate to be an ill or injured patient in the back of an ambulance that is having to navigate an interminable series of speed bumps.)

### **Bicycles**

As a frequent observer of traffic on Hill Crescent, it is evident that there are **no** bicyclists who commute to work on a daily basis. Occasionally, a rider seems to be using their bike to do a local shopping errand. But virtually all cyclists are recreational. Individuals or small groups of riders with their families are always well behaved. However, during the warmer months, there are often large groups of organized recreational cyclists. Most of these groups are also well behaved.

However, some groups are loud, obnoxious and self-entitled. They use up the entire lane and sometimes ride in the opposing lane as well. Going downhill, this doesn't obstruct vehicular traffic, but it can get frustrating when they slowly ride uphill. If they spot a deer (a frequent occurrence in our neighborhood) they think nothing of riding onto our property to yell at each other and point. The deer are terrorized and flee.

As a frequent pedestrian, I can state that some of these groups have caused me far more worry than the vehicles I encounter.

Virtually no bicyclist obeys the existing speed limits, particularly when travelling down the steep hill east of Markham. I have never seen a cyclist stop at a stop sign.

### **Street Parking Issues**

All of the residents in this area have driveways, so street parking by residents is not an issue. However, it is ironic that all of the current and future parking issues in this area have been (or will be) caused by poor planning by government agencies.

### **Doris McCarthy Trail**

The roads around the entrance point to this trail become a parking nightmare on nice days when hikers come from everywhere to use it. During the first information session on the **Scarborough Waterfront Project**, residents raised the issue of parking at the trailhead. Toronto Region Conservation Authority personnel assured the residents (with a straight face) that they believed that most users would use transit or bikes to access the trailhead. They were wrong.

### **Windy Ridge Condo Project**

The imminent approval of this massive 360+ unit condo will create massive problems in the area with overnight street parking. The development will have with only 140 parking spots. But it will have lots of bicycle parking spots. The assumption that these bicycles will replace the need for cars, rather than being used for recreational purposes, is absurd.

### **Summary**

As evidenced by the City's own Vision Zero map, the area I have discussed does **not** suffer from any significant *safety related* traffic issues. Periodic speed enforcement by police (particularly on nice spring days) would go a long way to solving the occasional speeder issue.

While other parts of the city may warrant aggressive action to control the infiltration of through traffic, this is simply not the case here. Please leave us, and our roads, alone!

A Concerned Resident,